

U.S. ASKS THANT TO HELP OLD SOVIET SPY LEAVE POLAND: Jewish Telegraph Agency reports U.S. Ambassador to UN, George Bush, has asked Secretary General U Thant to use his good offices to try to unite a one-time Soviet espionage chief with his family in Israel. The one-time Russian spy is Leib Trepper, known as Big Chief, who ran a major Russian spy ring in Belgium and France in the late 1930's and early 40's. The Trepper spy ring was directed against Germany. (Trepper was a loyal Communist serving at Moscow's direction, but was also a Jew fighting Hitler's anti-Jewish atrocities.) Nazi counter-intelligence eventually tracked down and destroyed the Trepper group, whose exploits are chronicled in a recent and mis-named book, The Red Orchestra. ("The Red Orchestra" was another Soviet spy ring, operating at the highest levels in Berlin, and had only a slight connection to Trepper.) At war's end Trepper was returned from a Nazi prison to a hero's welcome in his native Poland, now safely under a Communist regime installed by Moscow. He received Polish and Russian medals.

Then Trepper was seized in new Stalin terrors, and packed off to a Communist concentration camp for five years as an "imperialist agent." He was released during the Khrushchev "thaw." Later he was caught up in a renewed anti-Semitic campaign in Poland, and more recently while making portions of a French film that will document his spy exploits, Polish secret police arrested the ailing Trepper, now 67, and his wife, and threw them in jail. They were released after a week, but the film was confiscated and the filmmaker expelled from the country. Observers are struck by the irony: a master spy who in part must have been motivated by desire to destroy the German government that was persecuting Jews is today himself a victim of a Communist government's officially-sanctioned persecution of Jews, and his son (now living in Israel) appeals to U.S. for aid. Observers see little possibility of Trepper's release. Even 25 years after the fact, he still knows too much about Soviet intelligence operations.